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RECENT OBSERVATIONS OF EXTENSION WORK IN ALASKA

A radio talk by Miss Madge J. Reese, Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the Land-Grant College radio program, December 19, 1934, and broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations.

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The visitor to Alaska in the summer finds warm and pleasant weather, beautiful flowers, splendid gardens, and good crops. Most folks in the States associate the Arctic Circle with perpetual ice and snow. In August of this year I saw growing within twenty miles of the Arctic Circle cabbages much larger than my head. Even above the Circle a few gardens are grown. The assurance that certain vegetables and crops grow well in some sections of Alaska is beyond the experimental stage. The long hours of daylight make up for the short summer season. I tramped over several acres of cabbages, cauliflower, potatoes, oats, wheat, and field peas in the Fairbanks and Matanuska farming sections, and these fields and gardens were in themselves good demonstrations. The potato growers have received special help from the Extension Service in grading, disease control and storage.

Through the encouragement and assistance given by the Extension Service, back yard gardens are becoming popular in the towns. The extension workers demonstrate the making of hot-houses and of hot-beds for the early start of plants. In the back yards one sees a good many cute little glass houses for growing the longer maturing cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers. The 4-H Garden Clubs in the Fairbanks section hold a garden show each year. It's a real 4-H Club achievement. It was my good luck to be at Juneau at the time of the Southeastern Alaska Fair. The flower and garden exhibits equaled those I have seen in the States of Washington and Oregon.

I was told that Alaska needs more cows. The price of milk varied from 25 cents a quart in some communities in the Interior to 13 cents at some points down the Coast. Canned milk is used extensively. Throughout the Territory there is considerable demand for breeding stock and the Extension Service is assisting the farmers and dairymen with that problem. I visited one dairy farm in the Fairbanks section where the owner had built two 12-foot silos, 40 feet high, and they were being filled with a silage of oats and peas. The Extension Service furnished the plans for these non-freezing silos, which were the first silos built in the Fairbanks section.

Several farmers were successfully demonstrating the growing of Siberian Red Clover as a forage crop and a permanent hay crop. Also, some were making demonstrations with Arctic Sweet Clover, which is a good forage crop and soil builder. A few farmers have built hay driers modeled after the Extension Service plans. They use the driers if unfavorable weather interferes with sun and air-curing of hay.

Fox farming is conducted in many sections of the Territory; blues and silvers are the popular breeds. The Extension Service employs a veterinarian, who is kept very busy helping the fox farmers. Did you ever hear two fox farmers talking? Well, it is a rare treat. Foxes are as temperamental as human beings and all their whims have to be catered to in order to get the best results. The feeding and breeding is a scientific study.

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The women on the farms and in the small towns in Alaska want the same information, inspiration and encouragement as the women in the States. I met with groups of women in ten different communities and I found the women enthusiastically responsive to Home Demonstration Work. Projects are being conducted in twenty communities in different sections of the Territory. Food preparation and preservation, child nutrition, clothing construction and remodeling lead the home demonstration activities.

As most women do all their own housework, they are much interested in a project which they call "Taking the Work Out of House Work," in which is featured energy saving kitchens and arrangement of equipment, household conveniences, foot and back savers, energy saving laundry methods, and simplified housekeeping management.

Weaving or knitting useful and attractive woolen articles is popular and the women are using native wools as far as available. Some of the women and 4-H Club girls are becoming expert in making gloves of the native tanned hides, largely the caribou and reindeer hides. Both White and Indian boys and girls belong to the 4-H Clubs featuring activities such as gardening, sewing, rabbits, and handicraft in copper, wood and leather.

The Extension Service was established at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines at Fairbanks in 1930, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The heavy demands upon the Service cannot be wholly met with the present extension personnel, but the Extension Service of Alaska is to be congratulated upon its accomplishments in the four short years.